

HINTS FOR EQUESTRIANS.—NO. III.

RESTIFFNESS AND CATCHING THE BIT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HORSEMANSHIP."

WE have, in former articles on horsemanship, described the proper manner for a lady to mount into the seat—the position in which she should sit—the process of advancing—and the keeping of the balance. The latter, however, depends so much on a variety of circumstances that we shall resume the subject, and elucidate it by various cases in point.

When going round a corner at a brisk gait, the body should lean back rather more than in the walking position. In the same degree that the horse bends inward, must the body lean in that direction. If a horse shy at any object, and either turn suddenly around, or run on one side only, the body should, if possible, keep time with his movements, and adapt itself so as to turn or swerve with him; otherwise the balance will be lost, and the rider be in danger of falling off on the side from which the horse starts.

RESTIFFNESS.—Some horses are addicted to a very troublesome and vicious practice of turning about suddenly. We do not allude to shying, but to restiffness. A lady, certainly, should not ride any horse that is addicted to bad practices; but she ought, nevertheless, to be prepared against their occurrence. However long a trial she may have had of the merits and temper of her horse, she cannot be sure, when she takes the reins, that she may not have occasion to use her defences against rearing, kicking, shying, and restiffness, or be required to exercise her skill to save herself from the dangers attendant on starting, stumbling, or running away. The quietest horse may exhibit symptoms of vice, even without any apparent cause, after years of good behavior. The best-tempered are not immaculate, nor the sure-footed infallible. It is wise, therefore, to be prepared against frailty or accident.

With regard to *restiffness*: a horse soon learns that the left hand is weaker than the right, and consequently less able to oppose him; he, therefore, turns on the off side, and with such force and suddenness, that it is almost impossible, even if the rider be prepared for the attack, to prevent him. In this case, it would be unwise to make the attempt; the rider would be foiled, and the horse become encouraged by his success in the struggle to make similar endeavors to have his own way, or dismount his rider. The better plan is, instead of endeavoring to prevent him from turning with the left hand, to pull him sharply with the right, until his head has made a complete circle, and he finds, to his astonishment, that he is precisely in the place from which he started. Should he repeat the turn, on the rider's attempting to urge him forward, she should pull him round on the same side

three or four times, and assist the power of the hand in so doing, by a smart aid of the whip on the leg. While this is doing, she must take care to preserve her balance by an inclination of the body to the centre of the circle which is described by the horse's head in his evolution.

Restiff horses, when put out of temper, sometimes attempt to crush their rider's legs against walls, gates, fences, trees, posts, &c. An inexperienced rider, in such a situation, would strive to pull the horse away, but her exertions would probably be unavailing. The animal would feel that he could master the opposition, and thus, discovering the rider's weakness, turn it to her disadvantage on future occasions.

It may be regarded as a rule, that the rider should never enter into an open, undisguised contest with the horse. It is useless to attack him on a point which he is resolute in defending; the assault should rather be directed to his weaker side. If he fortify himself in one place, he must proportionally diminish his power of defiance in another. He anticipates and prepares to resist any attempt to overcome him on his strong side; and his surprise at being attacked on the other, and with success, on account of his weakness in that quarter, goes far to dishearten and subdue him. Nothing will conquer a horse so soon as this mode of turning his attack against himself, and making his defences appear acts of obedience to the rider's inclination.

When, therefore, a horse viciously turns to one side, with intent to crush the rider's limbs against a fence or other structure, pull his head forcibly toward it; and if, by the aid of the leg or whip, the rider can drive the horse's croupe out, she may succeed in backing him completely away from it. It is certain that when he finds his rider inclined to go to the fence as well as himself, he will desist; should he not, his croupe may be so turned outward that he cannot do his rider any mischief.

CATCHING THE BIT.—Another vicious practice in horses, is called "*catching the bit*." The horse that is addicted to this vice, is dangerous to ride. His object in grasping the bit between his teeth, is to deprive the rider of all power to control his motions, and to enable him to run away at discretion. When the lady finds that her horse has caught his bit, she should quickly turn him about several times; and when he appears to be a little subdued, by a sawing motion, she should wrest the bit from the embrace of his teeth. But if the horse be high-spirited, no exertions on the part of the rider will effectually correct the practice.